



5786 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Lech-Lecha / פרשת לך-לך

Brothers Divided, in Yerushalayim United

Long before *Dovid HaMelech* established his permanent capital in *Yerushalayim*, the nations of the world already recognized the holy city as a place unlike any other. They sensed its metaphysical significance, the gateway to the heavenly realms (*Ramban, Bereishit 14:18*). They called the city *Shalem*, evoking wholesomeness and peace.

Not coincidentally, *Yerushalayim* straddles the border between two *shevatim*. As we have discussed in the past, *Dovid HaMelech* deliberately chose *Yerushalayim* as his capital specifically because it lay on the boundary of *Yehudah* and of “rival” *Shevet Binyamin*. As soon as *Dovid* replaced *Shaul* and his descendants, he knew it was essential to capture the only place capable of uniting the descendants of *Leah* and *Rachel* (see *Shmuel Beis*, chapter 5 with *Malbim*).

In the writings of the *Ramchal*, the *Vilna Gaon*, and Rav Kook, the children of *Rachel* are associated with mastery over the physical world. Rav Kook referred to them as the metaphoric “*guf – body*” of *Klal Yisrael*. The children of *Leah* are associated with the internal spiritual realm, the *neshama* of *Klal Yisrael*. Only in *Yerushalayim*, the city of *shleimut* and *achdut*, can the body and soul unite. And only then can *Klal Yisrael* fulfill its unified destiny.

The meeting of *Yosef – Rachel’s* primary son – and *Yehudah – Leah’s* primary son – after years of painful estrangement, was anything but simple. Their relationship grew darker and more dangerous before healing could begin.

Yosef appears to “pursue” and torment his brothers. *Yehudah* and the brothers cannot fathom that behind this harsh, un-brotherly exterior lies the immortal bonds of *Kedushat Yisrael* and *Achdut*.

In the climatic moment, *Yehudah* steps forward to defend *Binyamin*. The *Midrash Rabbah (Bereishit 93:6)* teaches that the word *שיגשג* – and he drew close – could have several different meanings. On the one hand, the language could capture an aggressive, hostile attack. *Yehuda* was drawing close in order to destroy *Yosef*. The Midrash describes both brothers performing feats of enormous strength, threatening and intimidating each other into submission. On the other hand, the word also connotes appeasement and reconciliation. *Yehuda* drew close to this “stranger” with feelings of fury and hatred, yet at the same moment, unknowingly sets in motion the process of ultimate reconciliation with his long-lost brother.

Yosef and *Yehuda* do not just forget their painful pasts. *Yehuda* finally recognizes the greatness of *Yosef*, understands that his dreams were truly prophetic. The son of *Leah* is finally able to see beyond *Yosef’s* Egyptian mask and recognize the holy vessel of redemption before him.

הזה – בימים ההם בזמן הזה – the process of *Kibutz Galuyot* and our return to *Eretz Yisrael* has reunified brothers that have been apart for so many years. Yet, these brothers no longer recognize each other, vehemently



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disagree with each other, and threaten each other. Confusion, fear, and hopelessness cast a dark shadow over our land. The gap between the metaphysical paradigms of *Rachel* and *Leah* has never seemed so large.

And yet, is it possible that specifically in this darkest moment, *Yosef's* final revelation will take place? Is it possible that the holy city of *Yerushalayim*, mercifully restored to Jewish hands and pulsating with the children of *Rachel* and *Leah*, will fulfill its destiny and unify the holy sons of *Yaakov*?

With fervent prayers for the ultimate reunion of *Rachel* and *Leah*, speedily in our days.